



23a. *Ceratophyllum demersum*, also known as hornwort, is an invasive aquatic weed that forms dense rafts and smothers native plants. It was first noticed in the Waikato in 1963 and is now so widespread that it is almost beyond control.

Weed



Gardeners

23b. Lifestyle block owners prune and weed plants lining their driveway.



24a. Beef cattle graze under an alder grove on the left bank of the river.

Beef



Dairy

24b. The sacred mountain Taupiri looks over a dairy farm owned by the Tūrangawaewae Trust Board. Te Puea Hērangi bought the farm in 1940 as a business to sustain the people of Tūrangawaewae.



25a. The little black shag feeds by diving for small fish and eels.

Wild



Domesticated

25b. Martha's nine free range chickens eat kitchen scraps, chicken feed and whatever they find around the section.



26a. A smallholder farmer grazes beef cattle on a riverside paddock.

Riverside



Farm

26b. Four thousand chickens live under one roof at a broiler breeder farm.



27a. After the 1863–64 Land Wars, King Tāwhiao’s land was confiscated by the colonial forces and used to accommodate stables. It later became Ngāruawāhia’s unofficial town dump. In 1920 Tawhiao’s granddaughter, Te Puea Hērangi, led her people to buy back the land, returning it to Tainui ownership. Tūrangawaewae is now the seat of the Kingitanga movement, hosting many hui, including the annual Regatta.

Tūrangawaewae



Garden

27b. The Tūrangawaewae community vegetable garden was pioneered by Mrs Rawerawe Hērangi. She brings in local school children to learn the art of gardening. The garden produces potatoes, kamokamo, kūmara, pūhā and other traditional vegetables.



28a. Exotic willows are felled and poisoned to prepare space for a riverbank native restoration project.

Stump



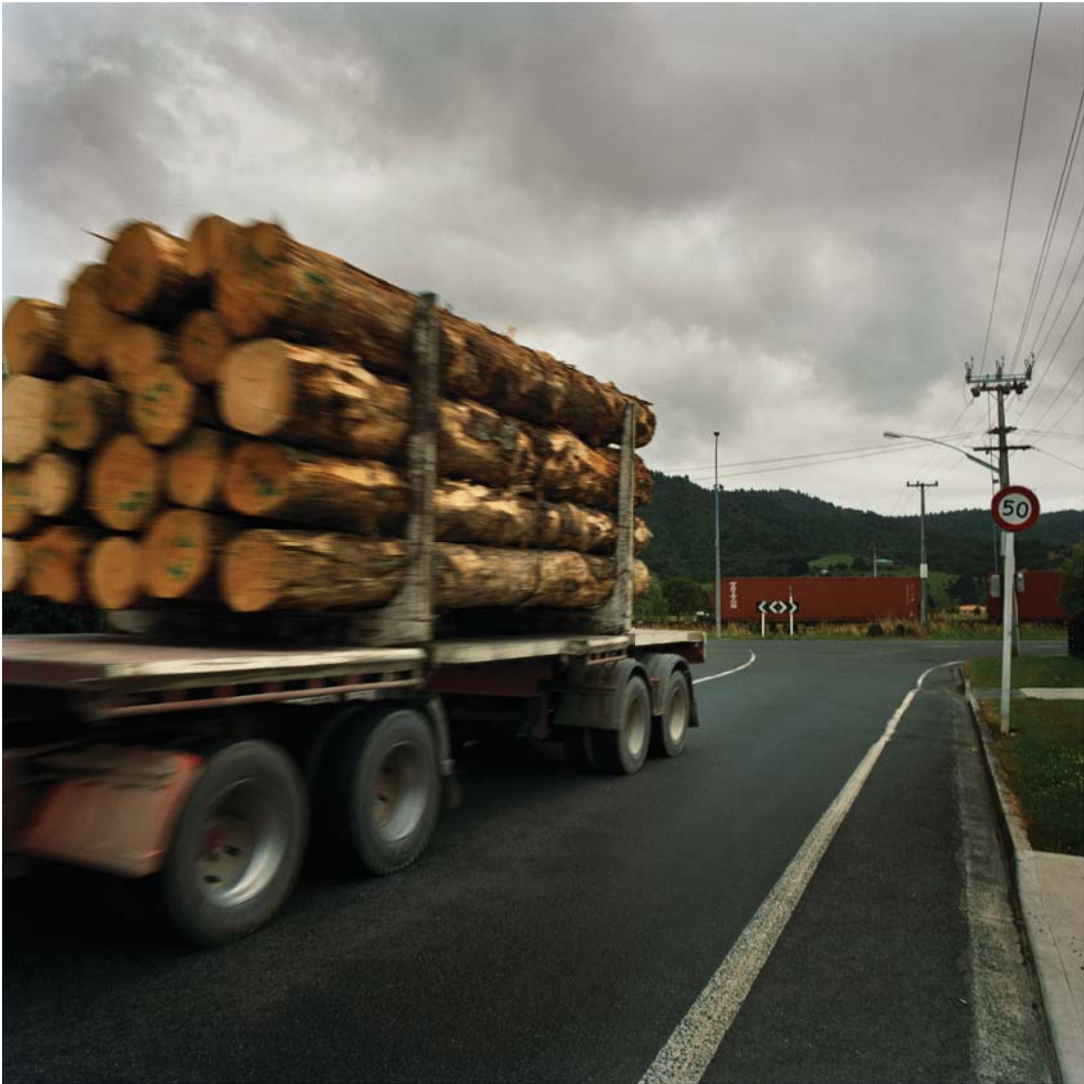
Kauri

28b. A young kauri grows beside Tūrongo House, the official residence of King Tūheitia. At this site in 2008 the Crown and Waikato-Tainui signed a Deed of Agreement that recognises past grievances and sets the stage for the co-management and cleaning up of the river.



29a. Ngāruawāhia Primary School works with Waikato River Care in restoring native plant habitat to the banks of the lower Waikato River.

Replanting



Forest

29b. The Hākarimata Range, on the horizon, is covered in native forest, including scattered pockets of kauri. Hākarimata is named after the 'raw feast' of animals and plants that inhabits its slopes.

- 1a. River

2a. Wreck

3a. Classified

4a. Kōura

5a. Flood

6a. Real estate

7a. Remnant

8a. Swimming

9a. Noxious

10a. Damaged

11a. Exotic

12a. Village

13a. Plastic

14a. Fortified

15a. Kaeo

16a. Detritus

17a. Power

18a. Lifestyle

19a. Wandering

20a. Data

21a. Maimai

22a. Wastewater

23a. Weed

24a. Beef

25a. Wild

26a. Riverside

27a. Tūrangawaewae

28a. Stump

29a. Replanting

1b. Road

2b. Memorial

3b. Hidden

4b. Miropiko

5b. Traffic

6b. Dogs

7b. Gully

8b. Fish

9b. Apricots

10b. Land

11b. Native

12b. Centre

13b. Suburb

14b. Subdivision

15b. Pūkeko

16b. View

17b. Burn-off

18b. Construction

19b. Fly

20b. Field

21b. House

22b. Landfill

23b. Gardeners

24b. Dairy

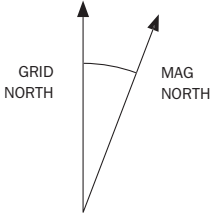
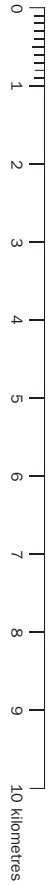
25b. Domesticated

26b. Farm

27b. Garden

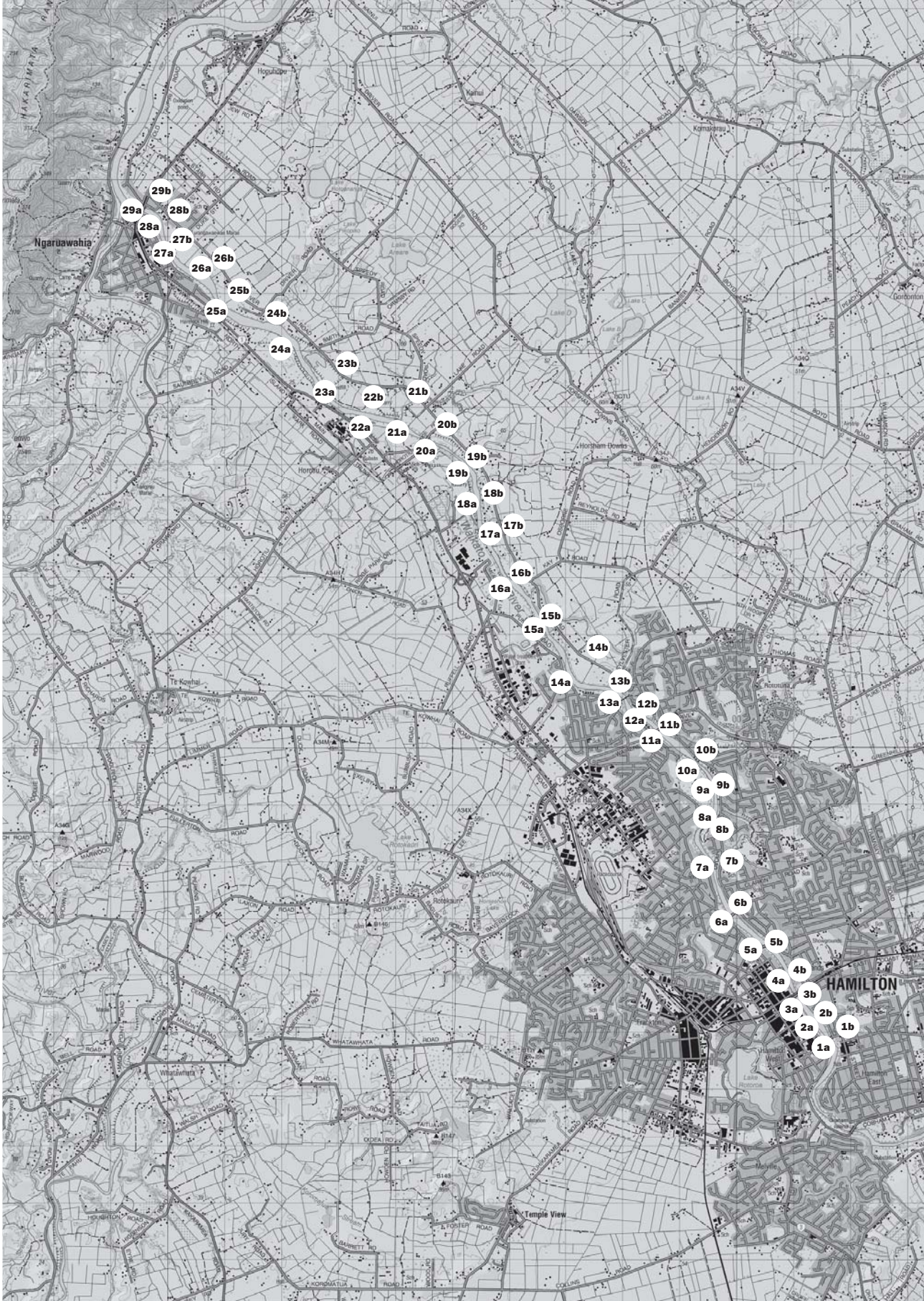
28b. Kauri

29b. Forest



MAGNETIC NORTH on this map is 21½° (382 mils) EAST of GRID NORTH during 2009 increasing at the rate of approx. ½° (9 mils) over 19 years.

The map (right) is reproduced with the kind permission of Land Information New Zealand. It is a detail from the map "NZTopo50-BD33 Hamilton, Edition 1.01 Published 2011".



RIVER~ROAD
JOURNEYS THROUGH ECOLOGY

Wiremu Puke



HE MAIMAI AROHA MŌ WAIKATO NĀ TĀWHIAO

~

Ka matakītaki iho au ki te riu o Waikato
Anō nei hei kapo kau ake māku ki te kapu o taku ringa,
Ka whakamiri noa i tōna aratau,
E tia nei he tupu pua hou.

Kia hiwa ake au i te Tihi o Pirongia,
Inā hei toronga whakaruru hau mōna ki tōku tauawhirotanga.

Anaa! Te ngoto o tōna ngawhaa i ona uma kihai i ārikarika
A Maungatautari, a Maungakawa,
Ōku puke maunga, ngā taonga tuku iho:
Hoki ake nei au ki tōku awa koiora me ōna pikonga
He kura tangihia o te mātāmuri.

E whakawhiti atu ai i te kōpu mānia o Kirikiriroa,
Me ōna maara kai, te ngāwhaa whakatupu ake o te whenua mōmona,
Hei kawē ki Ngāruawāhia, te huinga o te tangata.

Araa, te pae haumako, hei okiokinga mo taku upoko,
Hei tirohanga atu ma raro i ngā hūhā o Taupiri.

Kei reira ra, kei te oroko hanganga o te tangata,
Wāhia te tungaroa o te whare, te whakaputanga mō te Kingi.

Nā Tāwhiao, ca.1825-1894, He kiingi tuarua

TĀWHIAO'S LAMENT FOR THE WAIKATO

~

I look down the valley of Waikato
As though to hold it in the hollow of my hand
And caress its beauty
Like some tender verdant thing.

I reach out from the top of Pirongia
As though to cover and protect its substance with my own.

See how it burst through
The bosoms of Maungatautari and Maungakawa.
Hill of my inheritance
The river of life, each curve more beautiful than the last.

Across the smooth belly of Kirikiriroa,
Its gardens bursting with the fullness of good things
Towards the meeting place at Ngāruawāhia.

There on the fertile mound I would rest my head.
I look through the thighs of Taupiri.

There at the place of all creation
Let the king come forth.

Tāwhiao, ca.1825-1894, Second Māori King

VIEW FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

~

I like to start this journey by an imaginary climb up Taupiri Mountain to get some perspective on the land. When I'm at the top I look into the distance and I can see Pirongia and Kakepuku. I can see how denuded the flanks of the mountains are; like Papa-tū-ā-nuku, mother earth, with her cloak stripped. And I can see vast areas of dairy farmland.

You know, I wish I could look at it with different eyes and see it in the year 1500. I'd like to go back in time through the lens of a time-machine camera and just go 'click'.

There would be vast expansive areas of kahikatea woodlands. Huge, huge trees: tōtara, tawa, kauri. A near impenetrable wall of primeval forest. There would be very rich bird life, many species of duck. Undisturbed birds by the thousands, millions, echoing through the valleys. The forest would be interspersed with an abundance of wetlands, with toetoe and kōwhai blooming. Waterways teeming with eels and freshwater crayfish, freshwater mussels, whitebait. So, that whole landscape would have just been a mass of life and birds in every direction.

Then the arrival of the Polynesians. You'd see isolated areas of smoke: forest being burnt off for villages and pā and settlements, clearing land for cultivations. And then there'd be tracks established along the ridges to get access down to the river. Large trees that had fallen down would have been turned into canoes to travel up and down the river more easily. Then you have aspects of war between different tribal groups.

Then come down to the 1840s; the arrival of missionaries. Some of the earliest missionary accounts describe the journey from Taupiri through to Cambridge as a continuous unbroken line of cultivations along the river. Orchards with peaches, plums, pears. And wheat fields, corn, flour mills, flax mills. There would be canoes taking produce down the river to Auckland.

In 1865 the land was confiscated under the Land Settlement Act. It was almost like we were cut off at the knees. Europeans came and settled in the Waikato basin, and the landscape was cleared again for European agriculture. Having the land taken from you at gunpoint and finding that you can't come back to live here anymore, that became a very hard obstacle for people of that generation to get over. In some instances we lost not only the land; we lost our stories too.

I well remember stories being told to me as a young boy of key ancestors that were alive during the land wars. They mourned themselves regarding their loss of land and then died. In Māori terms it is called whakamomori. I suppose the last occurrence of whakamomori that I saw was with my Grand Uncle and Grand Auntie in 1976. Uncle Takapu passed away and we had his tangi out at Hukanui Pā at Gordonton, and my Grandfather's last living sister, Whaea Rawi, she was in such grief, wailing and mourning. I have never heard anything like it. By the next day she had died, she was right next to the coffin. For a brief time they laid in state together. She couldn't live without her husband. I remember being told by the Aunties and Uncles that they used to hear that type of wailing and mourning when land was being taken through the Court, when the Crown would pass judgement that the land no longer belonged to a certain family. And it would have been very difficult for them to appear before the confiscation courts at the time, to have to try and argue in a very foreign court system that this land is very important to them, and to find it had just been taken. It's like a child having a bond with its biological mother; it's difficult to sever that relationship. So the connection and that relationship with the land is very much a part of our whakapapa.

As a kid the earliest stories I heard about the land were related to me by the late Reverend Dave Mānihera. "Uncle Dave" we used to call him. It's a rather interesting situation with Uncle Dave being a full clergyman in the Methodist faith, and here were these very pagan ancient stories that have possessed his mind, the sort of X-File stories that the missionaries banned. He also participated in Pai Mārire, karakia and tapu lifting ceremonies. He was a clergyman on one level but also deeply in tune with the Māori spiritual world. At Butler Place, where Uncle Dave lived, we often used to hear the story about the

Waikato River and how it was formed. This story relates to Taupiri being a woman who actually fell ill. When you look at Taupiri Mountain from the other side of the river, on the Hākarimata Road, the mountain's geological profile resembles a woman giving birth with her knees tucked up. This geological metaphor is illustrated in King Tāwhiao's waiata that he composed immediately after the land war confiscations of 1865. Taupiri fell ill and because she had a very close affection for Tongariro, a servant and his dog were sent to the central plateau to fetch the curative waters of Tongariro. The servant and the dog reached the central plateau. When Tongariro heard about the plight of Taupiri he called on the gods. His chants caused water to gush out of a rock, forming a torrent that travelled down the mountain. These were his tears of affection and love for Taupiri. The gushing water headed north towards Hauraki. The ancestral gods followed the servant and his dog, with the torrent behind them, as they returned to Taupiri. Because the water had to be guided back to Taupiri it was diverted just south of Cambridge. The ancestral gods called to the dog to divert the torrent in order for the river to follow in its intended pathway. You can still see the original course where the river used to flow to the Hauraki. Eventually the waters came to Taupiri and broke through the Hākarimata Range to form the Taupiri Gorge. This is how my ancestors interpreted how the Waikato River's pathway was formed.

Now that is really interesting from a geological point of view. Because this is an instance where western science and Māori stories of creation agree with each other. Professor John McCraw often used to quiz me on that: "How did ancient Māori know how to form a story around processes of geology which we as earth scientists actually understand and agree on? How did you know about the geological forces that actually shaped the Waikato landscape?"

And what I'd say to him was, "John, we possess the knowledge of geology because for centuries we have been quite dependent on the use of stone tools. So you have to have some good knowledge based on what stones are suitable for healing purposes, for making umu or for making stone tools, adzes, patu, things like that. We knew how to interpret landscapes because they are embodiments of stories

of creation, ancestors and deities, monuments of our past, monuments to our ancestors and their deeds."

So the story is an aid to explain an environmental phenomenon. That is often how stories have evolved. I said to John, "With stories around myth there is usually a grain of truth."

He said, "Do you have other examples?"

I said, "Well, we know the story of Māui fishing up the North Island and how it is shaped like a fish, like a stingray. How did we know that the North Island was shaped like a stingray, without satellites, maps and Google Earth?"

INTO THE RIVER

~

I used to spend my summer holidays at Ngāruawāhia staying with my Uncle Hākopa and Auntie Ada Puke. When they wanted to get the kids out of their hair they'd send us down to the river for a swim. We'd head down to the township with all the Māori kids and congregate on the railway bridge. Then it was a matter of jumping into the river, particularly when the trains came along! It was a dangerous practice.

And I noticed that the river smelt kind of heavy. It had a stench about it. Some of the uncles and kaumātua would sit on the bank and watch us. They told us to try not to get water in our mouths or up our noses because the water was paru.

I wasn't always a confident swimmer but I wasn't afraid to take my first jump. I started jumping off the rail deck. I managed to plunge down a fair way but never quite hit the bottom. Then I saw the other kids climbing up to the very top of the girder, or the arch of the bridge itself. And I thought, OK, I'll get up there and give it a go as well. I guess that would be a fifteen metre plunge. So I jumped off. I went straight down, and boom! I hit the bottom alright. I remember rolling. I felt a strong pull and it was hard for me to surface and I started to panic. But surfacing, I just tried to get some air and then I went back under. It was then someone dived in and grabbed me by the hand and by the body and brought me to the bank. I was coughing and spluttering when I got ashore.

There was this old kuia sitting there. She says, "E pēhea ana? Kia tūpato koe? Are you OK? Just be careful." I was fine. I was just freaked out by the whole experience. But I didn't go back up the bridge again.

However, I was warned of a taniwha that occupied that part of the river around the bridge. It was supposed to be a huge eel of some sort. And thinking about that moment that I was under the water, being swept by the undercurrent, I started to think that this taniwha had obviously grabbed hold of me. It was like I was being grabbed by

an invisible powerful force. Then of course the movie 'Jaws' came out in 1975, and that was enough to really keep me out of the water, out of any water except for the bath tub! If I could see the bottom then I was safe.

As a kid growing up along the river and even swimming in the river I also heard stories about enchanted logs that were taniwha in their own way, seen to be floating up against the current of the river and heading up stream, and being told that if you see something like that you have to get out of the water. They're ancestral spiritual guardians that show themselves at different points of time when something major or significant is happening. If a chief or kaumatua had died often the taniwha would appear, and sometimes it would be in the form of a log going up river against the current. I haven't seen it happen but my grandparents saw something like that just before the outbreak of the influenza epidemic. They were washing their clothes on the banks of the river, downstream from Tūrangawaewae. There was a log on the river bank and they just had this bad feeling about this log. They stayed away; they just didn't want to go near it. When they came back about an hour later, the log was gone. Next thing deaths were happening; about two or three days later, the outbreak of the influenza epidemic. They didn't get sick, that's the strange part about it. But other families within the village at Te Kōpae, just near Ngāruawāhia, actually perished.

I can recollect in the 1970s actually seeing toilet paper hanging off the willow trees. I remember seeing tiko, or islands of excrement, floating down the river. Almost like brown puddles. And oil spills. You'd see these streaks of scum floating down from Hamilton. The public threw their rubbish into the river; out of sight out of mind. It was the proverbial toilet bowl. But as kids, we didn't take any notice of it. It's not until you get older that you realise, holy heck, that was...! And it dawned on us why there was less and less of a practice to take food out of the river by that time, because it was so polluted.

But then our people just didn't have the means to deal with a bureaucratic council and private businesses who were most responsible for doing this to the river. The Waikato River was the most environmentally damaged landmark in the country. It was danger-

ous. The injustice of it all was that it passed through many of our marae. The streams used to flow with offal, blood, milk, raw sewage, untreated chemicals, farm effluent. While we don't see some of these things happening any more, some of the damage is irreversible. The river has the ability to repair itself to a degree, because it flows, but some of the fragile ecosystems will never repair themselves. How do we remedy this?

It took a conscious effort of people, key people, like my father Hare Puke, those great strong people that stood up and made very sound logical comments to the mainstream. I remember my father appearing on national television when the Auckland Regional City Council voted to truck all their city waste and rubbish down to the Waikato into the disused coal mines. This motor-mouth consultant appeared on the Holmes show, and my father just couldn't get a word in without this other guy just interjecting all the time.

Hare just let it go until quarter way into the interview, and then he said something that just about stopped the whole interview. He said to the consultant, "Where do you live son?"

And the consultant said, "What is that supposed to mean?" Now that was an evasive question.

So Hare said, "How would you like it if we came and dumped all our effluent waste on your front door step? Can we use your house as a toilet?"

It's alright for these consultants to dish out their nice ideas, as long as it doesn't affect them.

I believe that the river is now cleaner than what it used to be but I still wouldn't like to put my nose in the water.

It's such a majestic landmark and it's got a power about it that frightens people. It's broad in some parts, the water is dark, you can't see the bottom. It's got a sense of foreboding about it. If you jump in you can drown, which is a reality. It's got all sorts of unpredictable bends and corners and cliffs towering above it. It's been known to take lives. It's been known to shape whole communities and influence communities. We're subservient to its majestic power. Not the other way round.

ON THE FARM

~

Our farm was a very, very small activity. It was only 87 acres. We had only 110 cows. And I was just a farm labourer, working on my parents' farm, me and my brothers. We all did it. That was just our tour of duty, to quell any form of rebellion in us teenagers, to keep us working. I was milking before school and after school. If I missed the school bus I had to run fifteen kilometres to class. But if one of the locals drove past they might give me a ride. We were a hard working family.

On our farm we had a unique practice—most of the manure that came out of our cow shed used to go into a pit, into a large hole, just used to sit there. In fact the cow effluent broke down into a black mud. It was just decomposing material: leaf material. It used to make this black oxidised mud, which was useful for dying flaxes. We stacked up the effluent until it was dry, then we put it in wheelbarrows and fed it back onto the grass. We didn't really have the chemicals farmers use nowadays. So there was the difference.

Our farm and our marae were not that close to the local creek. The big farms that bordered on the creek tended to be the worst offenders. Those farmers were spreading fertiliser all over their farms. And all that nitrogen, as well as the untreated cow manure from the cow sheds, just got washed into the streams, and then made its way to the Waikato River. Our local creek was treated like a sewage outlet.

What became more problematic was that when we were going to get watercress and food like that we'd be very careful because of the discharge from farms, particularly into those big drains. And then there was the trouble with the eels. When the dairy factory was still operating at Gordonton we used to get eels down by the factory, where the milk was just discharged directly into the stream. And they were huge fat eels—big! We were still getting eels into the 60s and

70s and 80s. But the taste started putting us off; just had a gammy type of taste to it. The best indicator of the taste of eels was the old people, the kaumātua, the old uncles and the aunties; they knew what good food tastes like. I suppose they came from an era where relatively very little pollutants were around. They started to say they wouldn't touch food from the streams and rivers; they said the taste was horrible.

As we got really into dairy farming we got less and less reliant on gathering traditional food. Because of the pollution, and also because we were able to book up food to the local Co-op Dairy. So our family got caught up in the trend, and so did most of the farmers; we didn't need to go out and gather traditional food, locally.

But it certainly has come a long way from the 70s in the bad old days of polluting the river. There's a change to practices of farmers; it does require a huge shift of finances on their part to deal with these things. They've got to be given a really good reason why they should do this, rather than just appeasing Māori or Tainui's wishes to clean up the river as a recreational waterway. Some farmers are taking the initiative of planting gully margins around waterways, or replanting them back into native reserves. I do commend that there has been some action around that. And I think that's a step in the right direction. There's still a long way to go. We're never going to get the river as pristine as it used to be, because the reality is that there's a lot of nitrate impregnating the grounds that has been used by farmers, which is still going to take years to reach the river, because there's such a build-up in the ground water.

My dad and I were milking on our farm until the early 80s. We now lease the farm out for grazing. Last year we knocked down our old six-bay walk-through milking shed and buried it. We wound down the dairying operation of the farm because it was uneconomic; it was all about the economy of scale. And that has everything to do with the history of the land and its size, being only 87 acres.

Ngāti Wairere once lived at a number of settlements such as Kirikiriroa, Miropiko and Pūketē. These settlements are now all within the current boundaries of the city of Hamilton, on both sides

of the river. We lived upon these lands for centuries, by conquest of earlier inhabitants that predated the earlier arrival of the Tainui waka. We were dispossessed of all that land when it was confiscated after the 1864 raupatu. After the land wars the Crown allocated the land to the soldiers. But they still had to find somewhere for us to live. So the Crown granted us that small block of land at Hukanui so that we had a home. And also so that we could be cheap labour to the soldiers, so we could help break in those farms around us. So they could prosper, at our expense.

The farm, including the marae at Hukanui, was originally a partitioned land reserve that was surveyed very early in 1866. And that land was first granted to my great-great-grandfather Hākopa Te Waharoa; his name appears on that block. The land was granted to him in 10 October 1874 by the Inspector of Surveys in Auckland, Captain Heal, and the Undersecretary of Lands, Clarke, from the Native Office. The land went in succession from Hākopa Te Waharoa to his eldest son, my great grandfather Te Puke Waharoa and his siblings, his younger brother Nukutaurua, his two sisters Manopoaka and Te Mamaeroa, and down to his children.

On that land a marae, a papa kāinga, was built to accommodate the various branches of Ngāti Wairere who were dispossessed of their lands. And we developed a farm. But being Māori farmers we couldn't even apply to the bank for a loan. The banks wouldn't allow it. Couldn't get a mortgage. Their excuse was "its multiple-owned Māori land" — the banks were worried about what would happen in case we defaulted on the repayments. My dad and my grandfather were hard workers; they built up their name really well. But the banks wouldn't look at financing them. It's a form of discrimination alright. Many Māori farmers would have faced the same red tape as we did in their struggles in engaging with the banks.

My father used to say to the people at the bank, "The land was sold after the land wars as endowments for the University of Auckland and Victoria, and the major bank institutions that are now part of New Zealand's economic developments."

So while the other farms on either side of us flourished, and profited well, with up-to-date milking equipment and better houses, we couldn't earn. I'm only really starting to discover the amount of trouble we encountered as a Māori farming family.

From that environment you certainly know how to deal with being marginalised. You've got to be careful you don't become the marginaliser.

FROM THE ROAD

~

River Road is actually constructed upon an old Māori walking track that linked up various pā, villages and cultivation sites along the eastern river bank. The walking track went along the river terraces where it was relatively flat and easy to traverse, between certain forest blocks or kahikatea stands. Some areas were burnt off to create forest clearings, so there would be ease of access between point A and point B, and to hunt native birds in a sustainable way. The track branched off to places where you could get fresh drinking water and canoe landing sites. Some of it was quite difficult terrain, some of it not so difficult terrain. It was all foot traffic for many centuries.

Many of the main arterial routes leading into Hamilton are actually built on top of old Māori tracks, particularly along the ridges. When surveyors first came in they established their survey pegs all along the banks of the river, following those old tracks. It made logical sense for road surveyors to follow the old established tracks that my ancestors had already cleared. That's what I was told as a young boy. As we drove around the district my uncles and aunties would tell me "this road here, this was an old track that used to lead us out to Rotokauri" or "this road follows the old walking track to Gordonton."

One day I was driving Uncle Mana home, travelling along River Road. He was 88 at the time. I used to go and see him a lot, to look over our whānau manuscripts. I'd sit with him, often for two hours at a time and even longer. We'd have long conversations and, on his part, recollections about the history of Ngāti Wairere. On this day I'd picked him up to take him in support of a public hearing. After the hearing I took my uncle home. We drove along River Road, and as we left the city we went over the hill at Flagstaff and I heard him make a comment. He pointed down towards the river and he was saying in Māori that this place was called Te Tōtara.

He said, “This was the house, the home, the village of my grandfather.”

My ears sprang up straight away. I never knew about the significance of that location. It just looked like farmland to me. He continued to point in that direction and he told me in Māori that you’ll find the exact site of the old settlement if you find the canoe landing place on the river.

When we got home Uncle Mana’s wife had some lovely hot rēwena bread. So I stayed for a while further to hear what he had to say. He started to tell me the stories his grandmother told him about Te Tōtara.

In the 1850s and 60s Te Tōtara was just a collection of thatched whare raupō, not a big settlement; it was just a collection of Māori built huts. The hapū was called Ngāti Waikai.

They had groves of apple and peach trees in that settlement, corn, potatoes, tobacco, domesticated pigs, and flax was a big industry. They even had canoes taking produce down the river to sell in Auckland. Along the river at Te Tōtara there were these eel weirs that were constructed. Eel pots were set within the stockades to trap migrating eels.

And all along the fertile riverbank terraces there were big kūmara pits, lots of them. The pits are created by the removal of gravel, to develop the fertile layer of soil to grow kūmara and other crops. The excavation formed these bell shaped, roundish pits that were used for subterranean food storage too. They used to pack a very dry rauwhe, or fern root, inside the pit. The pits were a constant temperature and they were able store kūmara and other produce in those pits for nine months of more. They would have to stack them in a certain way so as not to bruise them. So they were very functional pits, and also there were other types of pits that tap into springs, to gather water from, especially good tasting fresh water itself. Uncle Mana talked about these pits along the banks of the river and as kids how they used to play in them, climbing in and out.

The original name of the entire ridgeline dominating the landscape of Te Tōtara was known as Te Hunga o Toroa. This name refers to the name of the late 17th to early 18th century carved

pataka, carved with stone tools. It stood somewhere on the ridgeline. The carvings were probably buried in the nearby Te Awa o Katapaki gully where it discharges at the Horsham Downs Golf course.

Uncle Mana told me his grandfather Hākopa Te Huia was cultivating at Te Tōtara at the time the British troops were seen coming up the river. They were seen coming on gunboats up the river. By then Hākopa and his people had heard what had happened at the battle of Rangiriri, that the British had taken it, and many lives had been lost. Then there was the fear of the soldiers and potential atrocities that they could do; people simply abandoned their crops and their possessions. It was very tense. When somebody turns up at your home with a gun pointed at you and says it’s not yours any more, what can you do? They went from being landlords to being tenants. They abandoned the land and went inland to Hukanui for a brief period, then they went to Ngāruawāhia and that’s where they settled, at a place called Te Kopae, along River Road.

Those are the stories Uncle Mana learnt from his grandmother.

Uncle Mana told me if you find the old canoe landing site you’ll find the old village, or what’s left of the old village. So when I actually drove out to Pukete Pā, which is dead opposite of where Te Tōtara was located, I looked across the river, and there under the willows I could see a beach of some sort. I could just see the indentations where the kūmara pits were. And I said, “This is the landing site that the Uncle Mana was talking about.”

So I went and saw Bill Featherstone, the general manager of Parks and Gardens, and later we met his cousins, who were owners of the site. I said, “Bill you know there’s an old papa kāinga village on the farm.”

He said, “It’s the first I’ve heard of it.”

I said, “I know it’s there, because one of my kaumātua, Mr Mana Martin, told me about it.”

So we got an archaeological survey done. We got Warren Gumbley to go and do the survey. And he found some interesting soil layers indicating the presence of garden soils. So he said, “Yes Wiremu, there is extensive evidence of occupation of a sizable village that was there.”

And I said, “Well that’s what we already knew.”

Up until then, only Uncle Mana knew about it. That local knowledge was very close to vanishing. I suppose some things don’t become obvious until you happen to be there at the right time and the right moment. Even his girls didn’t know about it until he started talking about it. He was an incredibly private man. I wouldn’t have been privy to that information if he hadn’t opened up about it that day when we were driving along River Road. To be told these stories by a kaumātua, you listened intently, and only once.

And nowadays the area is surrounded by new housing subdivisions. Now all you see is what I call dime-a-dozen houses; they’re big, but under them are a lot of kūmara pits. The developers called the place Woodridge Estate. But we know it as Te Tōtara. It gets its name from a very large tōtara tree that grew on the ridge overlooking the place. That tree was a sacred tree, very tapu. Nobody would go near it. Couldn’t even gather berries from the tree itself. Apparently that tree was hollow. It contained the remains of bones of those chiefs of Ngāti Wairere. The old practice of Ngāti Wairere was that when a chief died his body was buried temporarily in a hole. Usually after a couple of years they would exhume the body, scrape the flesh off the bones, and paint them with ochre, then lay the bones out on a woven whāriki for a second time. There was always a special sacred spring or stream where this would happen. Sometimes the bones were encased in sheets of tōtara bark, or in a carved wooden container. And when they’d encased the bones in a bundle they put them into the tree. This tree was deemed to be a sacred site that people stayed away from: a place that the ancestors would have a strong emotional or spiritual link to. By the old people’s accounts, and this is what I was told as a teenager, throughout the city there were similar landmark trees, particularly old trees that were full of bones, full of taonga, as well as greenstone. Those trees were rākau tapu.

This sacred tōtara was felled in the 1870s. Burnt off, I think, by the settlers while they were clearing land for pasture to raise animals. I tried to encourage the use of the name Te Tōtara for that suburb, and it fell on deaf ears. The developers tried to give me some

excuse; “Oh because it is a Māori name it won’t feature, it won’t sell the land.”

I said to them, “I disagree. Don’t give me that rubbish. What about Pāuanui? Remuera?” It’s a real struggle for most one-language cultures to deal with other languages.

So I said to the developer, and I catch these land developers out flat-footed every time, “Where’s the name ‘Woodridge’ from? Where’s the wood on the ridge? It is just bare. How many times has ‘Woodridge’ been repeated around New Zealand and around the world? You could have named it Te Tōtara because it is the original name. You could have acknowledged the tōtara tree; it’s quite a stately tree.”

He said, “Oh, we didn’t think about that.”

“Well hello, come talk to the local people; we’ll tell you about your history.”

In the end there was quite a moral victory for us. The main road into the subdivision was being named, and the developers couldn’t agree on a name. They wanted to call it something like Woodridge Drive or Petersburg Drive. What sort of shoe-box development names are those? That area already had a whole sea of European names that have no link with the land and its actual history: Endeavour Avenue, Resolution Drive, Vantage Place, Wisteria Place. They were still at loggerheads trying to name the main road until my father, Hare, was invited to the meeting. Hare explained the history of the area; he told them about Hākopa Te Huia, and the huia bird itself. After Hare finished explaining the history, Peter Bos said “I’ll drop Petersburg Drive,” and David Lugton said “I’ll drop Woodridge Drive.” It became Te Huia Drive. That pleased Hare immensely, to have that name recognised. Now the history lives on it that name, but it was close to becoming extinct like the bird of the same name. Names are important. The old people talk about a name having its own life force.

Then we marked the site of the old Te Tōtara village by erecting a tall pou; a carving that features the ancestors of Ngāti Waikai and the Featherstone family. I designed it, and Sam Roa and Shane Tamaki carved it. The pou shows a real collaboration between us,

Ngāti Wairere, and the Featherstone family who preserved part of the old village site on a reserve. That pou faces up the river so that people can get a sense of the history of the place.

And that wasn't the only pou erected along River Road. We installed a pou at Miropiko Pā in 2007, and that was an uncanny experience. While the pou was being carved, at my advice, the council approached Alexy Simmons, the local archaeologist, to supervise the earthworks for the foundation pad. Because it was a classified historic place we needed a modification order, and we were legally required to have a qualified archaeologist on site. I chose the location for the pou; the old man was with me that day and he helped me choose the place. I was drawn to this spot, and said "we'll put the pou here." There were other places but this space felt safe. Sometimes you've got to be careful where you place a pou; you could put it on an old urupā, you could unknowingly desecrate these spaces. Before the works commenced we had the site blessed.

We left the workers to do the job, but I was called to say there was an accident at the site. The digger fell in the hole! So I turned up. Alexy ushered me over to look at the hole. She stood there in amazement and said to me, "Wiremu, you must look at the very interesting subsurface profile. There is the indication that there was once a large single post structure there two hundred years before." The remnants of its original foundation hole were intact, in exactly the place where we were going to place the new pou. Of all the places in the pā site I chose this spot where a large pou or support structure stood two hundred years ago! I saw this as a blessing. I was pleasantly surprised; it was meant to be.

THINGS WILL COME TO PASS

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I just happened to read through George French Angas's diary of his journey down the Waikato River in 1844. Now George Angas was an artist who journeyed into the Waikato, up the Waipa and into the King Country and into the heartland of the North Island plateau, sketching many scenes of Māori life at the time: monuments, carvings, villages, pā and an amazing array of cultural structures that had disappeared, that were gone by 1850. What he caught was a unique insight into the life of inland Māori, particularly Waikato, Maniapoto and Tūwharetoa.

One of the things that he noted when he came up the river in September was that the kōwhai was in full bloom. He wrote about the sight of seeing the river awash with yellow flowering kōwhai. He also noticed a peculiar custom of river tribes; some individuals travelling in the canoes were wearing bunches of kōwhai flowers and in his own words, "The natives were wearing the flowers suspended from their pierced earlobes." So the wearing of the kōwhai flower obviously had some religious significance, and it also represented a change of season. My ancestors actually planned by the seasons, lived by the various phases of the moon, and by the rising and setting of certain stars throughout the traditional Māori calendar. By September the stars of matariki over that period of time were called Te Paki o Matariki, which denoted the transition from winter to spring, or the heralding of the warmer months. The month of September, when the kōwhai was in flower, was generally the month of tilling of the ground in preparation of the kūmara beds or garden beds along the banks of the river, being readied for the planting.

In the 1840s Angas saw a profusion of kōwhai, the river completely awash with yellow and gold. But when I looked at the city in 2005, what I saw had barely any resemblance to the 1844 descriptions of George Angas and other travellers. There are some trees but they are exotics: a lot of exotics and specimen trees. There are copses of

ponga or kāmuka, those really hardy ones, or maybe some native trees in gully systems. But really, you were probably lucky to see the occasional kōwhai tree in the back of someone’s garden, if that.

How did they disappear? Well, through farming activities, vegetation burn-off. It wasn’t just Europeans that did it. Māori did it too. I have to say we weren’t always careful in looking after our environment. We also caused the demise of many birds, noticeably the extinction of the moa and the hōkioi, the giant eagle. The kōwhai was here long before any humans settled. So when the kōwhai and other native trees diminished in numbers so did many of the native birds. And we gradually lost the melodious chorus that went along with it.

This brain of mine was ticking over, and I had this idea about bringing back kōwhai, planting thousands of kōwhai along the city riverbanks. I shared the idea with Hare, my father, about kōwhai becoming an iconic symbol for a festival, one that could rival the cherry blossom festival in Japan. It’s an opportunity to develop a festival that doesn’t carry the baggage of the past. Most regional holidays, such as Auckland or Otago Anniversary Day, tend to celebrate colonial events, colonial people or the mapping of the regions, which was a colonisation process. There’s very little Māori involvement. Here we have the opportunity of developing our own holiday that falls within the month of September. The flowering also happens at a time that’s important to dairy farmers, when the grass is at its best, when the dairy fat starts really pumping. So, we could develop a kōwhai festival that brings together all aspects of the community. It could celebrate our diversity and take us out of the winter doldrums.

I wrote up these ideas as a feature article for the Waikato Times, and ran it past the editor. He said “This is brilliant,” so he printed it. Then it started to attract interest. I gave a public submission for the annual plan to council. They were impressed with the whole idea of planting kōwhai along the banks of the river. They embraced the idea. One thing that the city does really well is plant trees, so I capitalised on that.

For this to happen we needed a matua, or parent seed, to grow seedlings and propagate them. We chose a very big two hundred year

old kōwhai tree in Hamilton, growing in a Hillcrest gully near the riverbank. I’ve known about the tree for a long time; one of our kaumātua told me about it. I was told that it was not far from an old Māori burial ground. And it was close to a milk treatment station that operated until the 1960s. The tree would have started out as a sapling in the 1820s I suppose, and it would have seen my ancestors of the last six or seven generations. When the flowers of certain trees like rata and kōwhai open it’s almost like the eyes of the ancestors opening. That tree would have seen a lot of history.

So the city council actually took hold of the whole idea. They grew the seedlings. We planted the first five hundred kōwhai trees in the city in 2006, mainly along the river corridor. Hare and myself, Michael Redman, the mayor of the time, and Tony Marryatt—we planted the first rows of kōwhai. Now those trees would be probably just over a metre high. The focus at the moment is to plant more and more kōwhai, and to get them established, and to get them really well established. It would be good to get some really thick corridors of kōwhai along the city river banks, particularly in the areas where you get the most attractive view shafts of the river. And those trees will take a few years to grow. In about ten, twenty, thirty years we’ll start seeing them in their full grandeur.

It’s ironic that along our new urban highways, like Wairere Drive, we’ve planted a corridor of native trees, but along the Waikato River it seems to be a corridor of exotics. So why not change the picture and grow it back to native trees along the banks of the river? And let’s intersperse the river banks with plantings of other types of native trees so that they can flower at other times of year, so it’s not just the kōwhai that’s flowering. Let’s have kahikatea stands too. That’s exciting, to re-establish the native habitat. And let’s have more locally eco-sourced plants, because plants have their unique whakapapa or genealogy; they have their own relationship with the land. The more native trees we have the more it improves our property value and the more it improves our sense of well-being. That will be good for the native bat too. And it will attract more birds; birds that haven’t been seen in the city for many, many years, like kaka and korimako, the bellbird. These birds will become a familiar part of

the landscape. Then we'll be able to hear the huge sound of bird life that once echoed around the Waikato.

Let's also commemorate the pā, battle sites and boundary landmarks along the river walkways. The Waikato River could be like the Nile; a powerful and salient statement of the cultural vigour of Waikato, echoing centuries of stories. We could have a strong eco-cultural tourism on par with the Nile. We could have people discovering the sites and stories of Waikato Tainui over the last five hundred years; stories of Māori and Polynesian settlement along the river, stories that have been silent for years.

What if someone was to pick up this book in a reference library in three hundred years, long after we've gone? What if they look out the window and ask "How has this landscape changed?" Will the stories written here still reflect the spirituality and the history of these landmarks? Would River Road or Wairere Drive be monorail systems? Or would cars be flying along Wairere Aeropath? Would some animals and plants be extinct by then? Would the porohe still be alive? Would the tuna, the longfin eel be extinct? Will there be 3D cameras that can interpret the images in this book to make realistic images that almost bring things back to life? Will native plants evolve with the changing climate? Are we going to see more native trees than exotic trees? Or more tropical trees and birds migrating south because the climate is a lot warmer?

What will our future look like?



BIOGRAPHIES

David Cook

David Cook is a documentary photographer and lecturer in the School of Media Arts at Wintec in Hamilton. His photographic projects deal with aspects of ecology and community. During his former job as a photographer at the Waikato Museum, David launched a long term project exploring the impact of coal mining at Rotowaro. This project has been carrying on since 1984, resulting in various exhibitions and the book, *Lake of Coal: The Disappearance of a Mining Township* (Craig Potton Publishing / Ramp Press 2006).

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Wiremu Puke

By whakapapa, Wiremu has tribal affinities to Waikato Tainui Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Kōura, Ngāti Mahuta and Ngāti Porou through Te Whānau a Tapuhi, Te Whānau a Hinerupe and Te Aowera. Wiremu is a consultant, historian and former assistant curator at the Waikato Museum. He has been commissioned by district and regional councils to develop interpretative historical accounts for cultural sites. Wiremu is a practitioner of ancient Māori stone tool carving techniques. He is project manager for Te Parapara Māori Garden in the Hamilton Gardens. Wiremu is also at the forefront of a community ecological restoration project which will see the planting of kōwhai along the banks of the Waikato River in Hamilton City.

Jonty Valentine

Jonty Valentine is an Auckland based freelance graphic designer and is also the co-editor of *The National Grid*. Recent significant projects include: catalogue design for Leonhard Emmerling's exhibition *Out of This World* at the Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany; curation of the exhibitions *Printing Types: New Zealand Type Design Since 1870* and *Just Hold Me: Aspects of NZ Publication Design*, both at Auckland's Objectspace gallery; catalogue design for *Failing, Falling, Flying* by Rebecca Ann Hobbs at St Paul Street gallery Auckland; the exhibition/publication for *Event: An Atrium Project* at Project Space, RMIT University, Melbourne. Jonty has an MFA in Graphic Design from Yale University.

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